



Art History

English Lessons



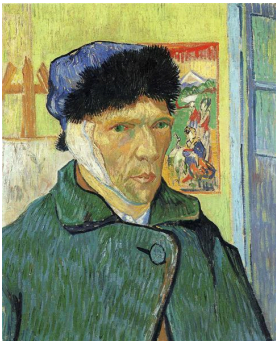
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Vincent Van Gogh

Vincent van Gogh was a Dutch painter born on March 30, 1853, in Zundert, a small village in the Netherlands. He is one of the most famous and **influential** artists in history, though he was not well-known during his lifetime. In just over a decade he created about 2,100 works of art which include landscapes, still life, portraits. He was the eldest of six children, and his early life was marked by difficulty and instability. He had various jobs before becoming an artist, including working as a teacher, a preacher, and an art dealer. However, none of these **careers** made him happy, and he eventually decided to focus on art.

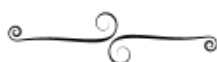
Van Gogh began painting seriously in his late twenties. In 1886, he moved to Paris, where he was influenced by the work of other artists, including Impressionists and Neo-Impressionists. In Paris, he met artists like Paul Gauguin and began using brighter colors and bolder techniques in his paintings. Van Gogh is best known for his unique style, characterized by **expressive** brushstrokes and **vivid** colors. Some of his most famous works include *The Starry Night*, *Sunflowers*, *Irises*, and *The Bedroom*.



Despite his artistic talent, Van Gogh struggled with mental health issues throughout his life. He suffered from severe **depression** and anxiety, which led him to spend time in mental hospitals. One of the most famous events in Van Gogh's life occurred in 1888, when he cut off part of his own ear after an argument with his friend, the painter Paul Gauguin. This event highlighted the extent of his mental health struggles.

Van Gogh continued to paint, even during his time in the hospital, and some of his best work was created during this period. Sadly, his mental health continued to **deteriorate**, and on July 29, 1890, at the age of 37, Van Gogh died by **suicide**. He had sold very few paintings during his life, and he was not widely **recognized** as an important artist until after his death.

Today, he is celebrated as one of the greatest artists of all time and he is thought to be one of the founders of modern art. His paintings are valued at millions of dollars, and his influence can be seen in the work of many artists who came after him. His story is one of incredible talent and tragic struggle, and his art continues to **inspire** people all over the world.





After reading the text, do the vocabulary exercise below:

Match the highlighted words from the text with their correct definitions:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1. Influential | a) Bright and intense in color |
| 2. Career | b) A series of jobs or professional roles a person has throughout their life |
| 3. Expressive | c) To be acknowledged or known by many people |
| 4. Vivid | d) To become worse over time |
| 5. Depression | e) Having a strong impact on others |
| 6. Deteriorate | f) An act of intentionally causing one's own death |
| 7. Suicide | g) A severe and long-lasting feeling of sadness |
| 8. Recognized | h) To encourage someone to do or feel something |
| 9. Inspire | i) To encourage someone to do or feel something |



Van Gogh loved writing letters. He had a very close relationship with his brother Theo, who supported him financially and they exchanged letters very frequently.

In these texts we can see how the artist felt about the world and Art in general.

Have a look at some of the letters in the Van Gogh museum browsing through the two links below. Then write a paragraph with a small description of these letters and your feelings towards them and the artist:

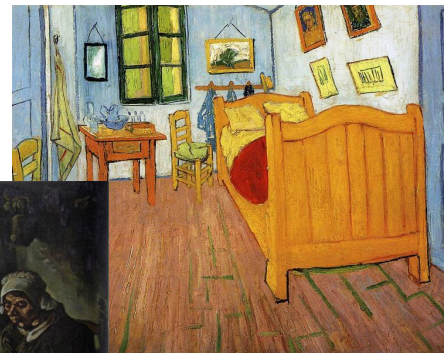
<https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/art-and-stories/stories/all-stories/van-goghs-letters>

https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/highlights/letters?fbclid=IwAR1HGITcP_hdwygUfAorEkJ0A5y1Mi6134EBqvFt_e9jcFuEGHv3woPxoxA&v=1





These are four of the most famous paintings by Van Gogh. Which is your favourite one and why? Taking into account everything you read about his life and works of art, his letters and his tragic end, write a paragraph expressing and justifying your ideas. Now make this paragraph part of a letter that you are sending to Vincent. What else would you like to include? (Letter length 100-150 words)



Answers to the vocabulary exercise:

1. Influential - e) Having a strong impact on others
2. Career - b) A series of jobs or professional roles a person has throughout their life
3. Expressive - i) Showing strong emotions or feelings
4. Technique - j) A method or way of doing something, especially in art
5. Vivid - a) Bright and intense in color
6. Depression - g) A severe and long-lasting feeling of sadness
7. Deteriorate - d) To become worse over time
8. Suicide - f) An act of intentionally causing one's own death



For more ideas on how to use masterpieces of Art to teach critical thinking, you can read my blog post here:

<https://www.ruthlessteacher.com/how-to-use-works-of-arts-to-teach-critical-thinking/>

And about the use of images in the language classroom, another of my blog posts here:

<https://www.ruthlessteacher.com/the-use-of-images-in-language-learning/>

I have made a pdf with a set of questions that I use a lot with my students when we study all types of images, you can download it here:

<https://www.ruthlessteacher.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Questions-about-images-in-class.pdf>





Painter

[Van Gogh](#) is generally considered the greatest after Rembrandt, and one of the greatest of the Post-Impressionists. The striking colour, emphatic brushwork, and contoured forms of his work powerfully influenced the current of Expressionism in modern art. (information from Wikiart).

Paintings

You can see Van Gogh's work online here:

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/vincent-van-gogh/all-works#!#filterName:all-paintings-chronologically.resultType:masonry>

And you can visit Van Gogh's museum in Amsterdam here:

<https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en>

The painting inside the text is called "Self portrait with bandaged ear" (1889) and you can find it in the *Courtauld Institute of Art*, in London:

https://courtauld.ac.uk/highlights/self-portrait-with-bandaged-ear/?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjwiOy1BhDCARIsADGvQnAmjpUT5Rxr2iROQNscSQUVcB5Q1LfFvO8UHDNE3qI5h6gvky9q3DYaAuYSEALw_wcB

The first painting of the writing activity is called "Still life with sunflowers" (1888) and you can find it in the *National Gallery of London*:

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/vincent-van-gogh-sunflowers>

The second painting of the writing activity is called "The Starry Night" (1889) and you can find it in the *MoMA museum*, in New York:

<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79802>

The third painting of the writing activity is called "The potato eaters" (1885) and you can find it in the *Van Gogh Museum* in Amsterdam:

<https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0005V1962>

The fourth painting of the writing activity is called "Vincent's bedroom in Arles" (1888) and you can find it in the *Van Gogh Museum* in Amsterdam:

<https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0047V1962>



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For any questions you may have you can message me at info@ruthlessteacher.com

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